

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

**Essential to Future Force Development:
ANG Participation in Officer In-Residence PME**

by

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Abstract

The Air National Guard (ANG) community has recently emphasized a renewed focus on officer development among its ranks, to ensure they continue to possess officers capable of military leadership at the state and national level. This paper focuses on the issue of in-residence PME and how it relates to the ANG, composed primarily of traditional guardsmen.

More effort must be exerted at the national, state, and local level to increase ANG attendance of in-residence PME, thereby providing states with a larger number of well trained, knowledgeable senior leaders. Devoting time to this endeavor can become challenging, particularly for a traditional guardsman in the ANG. It is imperative that senior leaders stress the need for military education throughout an officer's career, allowing them to devote time to attend in-residence PME. States must also provide an equitable, systematic means of selecting their best officers to attend in-residence courses. Senior leaders at the state and wing level also need to acknowledge the commitment and sacrifice required to become a skilled, educated officer, and attempt to ease the burden schools place on their personnel in any way possible.

SECTION 1: Introduction & Overview of the Officer PME System in the ANG

Recently, the Air National Guard (ANG) community has emphasized a renewed focus on force development, particularly in the area of officer development. The National Guard Bureau (NGB) and groups of Adjutant Generals (TAGs) and their staffs are currently reassessing priorities and objectives regarding officer development.¹ The goal is to ensure they possess officers capable of the highest levels of military leadership, individuals capable of standing on an equal footing with their senior active duty component counterparts. To accomplish this the ANG intends to improve the process of preparing officers for leadership roles in the Total Force structure, including traditional guardsmen who compose the majority of the officer force.

Professional Military Education (PME) is an essential element of officer development. This paper focuses on the issue of in-residence PME and how it relates to the ANG, a force consisting primarily of traditional guardsmen. More effort must be exerted at the national, state and local level to increase ANG attendance of in-residence PME, thereby providing states a greater number of well trained, knowledgeable senior leaders. In order to develop capable leaders for the future, the ANG must do a better job of stressing the importance of officer PME for professional development, and create a more consistent nomination system that sends their best officers to in-residence PME.

The ANG as an institution desires to promote more consistent participation in in-residence PME, in order to better prepare its officers for future leadership positions. With this problem in focus, establishing a baseline of current attitudes and interest in the various states is necessary. Finding states that are consistently active in nominating officers to attend and examining their system or methodology will help to yield potential alternatives for other states to adopt. The goal is to provide recommendations that might be implemented in multiple states

within the ANG, fostering better awareness about in-residence PME and creating a more consistent nomination process.

There are a few limitations to the type of research undertaken. Due to the lack of published material on the subject of ANG's stance or attitude toward PME, it was difficult to gather extensive supporting evidence. Primary sources include interviews and e-mail transactions with subject matter experts, in addition to sources such as an existing survey, published instructions (AFI &ANGI), military informational websites, and Community of Practice (CoP) forums. Each state is allowed to conduct their own process regarding PME, and it is difficult to understand all of the unique factors that may be involved in how each state conducts business. Factors such as the number of ANG officers in a state and the proximity to Air University may also play a part in states' level of PME participation.

This research paper intends to discuss the current problems with attendance of in-residence PME, and seeks to find ways to increase ANG participation in in-residence PME. This can be accomplished by heightening awareness at the state and unit level, and enhancing the candidate nomination and selection process. The intent is to provide a consistent pool of officers from all states to attend, and increase opportunities for traditional Guardsmen to participate. Providing recommendations for a state-wide PME promotion, nomination, and selection system for states and territories in the ANG to adopt can provide a significant contribution to the ANG.

PME Overview

As a bit of background, a quick look at the current PME system and how it relates to a traditional guardsman is necessary. Air & Space Basic Course (ASBC), is a six week entry level course not required by Air Reserve Component (ARC).² The fact that it must be completed within the twelve months of commissioning makes it a difficult course for many to attend.³ This

is particularly true for AFSCs which require lengthy initial training, taking much of the first year of a member's commissioned service.

Squadron Officer School (SOS) fulfills an officer's Basic Developmental Education (BDE) requirement, and can either be accomplished via correspondence or attending the one month resident course.⁴ All officers in the active duty component attend SOS. The number of school slots available limits the number able to attend from the ANG, so most officers complete the Distance Learning (DL) course.

Air Command & Staff College (ACSC) fulfills the Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE) requirement, and can be accomplished several ways. The vast majority of ANG officers complete ACSC via correspondence, through the DL program. A newer option is to apply for the Air Reserve Component Seminar (ARCS), a one year DL program mixed with two seminar lecture TDY's to the Air University (AU) at Maxwell AFB.⁵ The ARCS program runs from June of the current year to June of the following year. The two one-week seminars both occur in the month of June, at the beginning and the end of the course.⁶ This format aids in prompt completion of the standard correspondence coursework, and allows ARC officers to mix with peers and share experiences in a seminar format. The third option is to attend the school in-residence, a significantly more robust ten month seminar based course which yields an in-residence certificate and a Master's Degree in Military Operational Art and Science.⁷ Another DL format is the Online Masters Program (OLMP), another recent addition to AU's options. The internet-based OLMP consists of the in depth course material taught in the in-residence program, normally completed over a two year period.⁸ Officers completing the OLMP are awarded a non-residence ACSC certificate and the same Master's Degree in Military Operational Art and Science.⁹

Air War College (AWC) is the USAF's Senior Developmental Education (SDE) school, and there are three methods in which to accomplish it. The first is through the DL program, accomplishing it by correspondence. If accepted, one can attend in-residence and complete the ten month seminar-based school. The AWC also has an ARCS program similar to ACSC, which involves three seminar sessions and correspondence course work spread over two years.¹⁰

Only a few slots per academic year are available for ANG officers to attend PME in-residence. The ANG is currently allotted 105 in-residence slots for SOS, fifteen for ACSC, and just seven for AWC.¹¹ The cost estimate to send one officer to SOS for the one month course is \$12,500, which includes pay, travel, and per diem expenses.¹² For ACSC and AWC, the estimate to send one officer for the eleven month PCS is about \$104,000.¹³ From these numbers, the current budget for ANG in-residence PME participation can be calculated as approximately \$3.5 million.

SECTION 2: Difficulties and Successes with Officer PME in the ANG

The ANG currently has a difficult time finding officers willing to commit to in-residence PME. In general, there is a lack of interest in in-residence PME participation due to the personal constraints of many traditional guard officers. Devoting time to this endeavor can become challenging, particularly for a traditional guardsman in the ANG. Most officers do not understand the differences between distance learning and in-residence courses, and see little gain in attending. Assuming an individual has a full-time occupation outside the ANG, it is extremely difficult to take almost a year off from an employer for something deemed as optional. With the USAF's current high operations tempo, being an officer in an ANG unit involves regular deployments on the normal AEF cycle. Adding more time away from a civilian job for military education and training tends to detract from one's performance, whether it be real or perceived.

Unlike the active duty component, which builds attendance of in-residence intermediate and senior level schools in between other assignments, an ANG officer must choose to temporarily uproot their family for a period of time or attend school alone without family. Either of these choices places an undue burden on most guard families.

In many states there appears to be a lack of understanding and appreciation for in-residence PME programs by both eligible officers and their supervisors. Because so few ANG members have attended in-residence PME, few people at the unit level have experienced the personal benefit attendance provides when compared to completion by correspondence. This creates a general lack of appreciation and support from supervisors and mentors in the ANG. Many supervisors do not value or understand in-residence education, therefore they may discourage their people from attending because they do not wish to lose a manpower asset for almost a year.¹⁴

The current in-residence PME selection process remains relatively simple at this point. Officers interested in attending assemble a package that includes wing commander and TAG endorsements. States then nominate these officers and forward their packages to NGB. In the recent past, the level of interest in attending IDE and SDE courses in-residence has roughly matched the number of slots available to the ANG. If the renewed focus on officer development creates more demand for in-residence schools, states may need to create a systematic process in order to nominate their best candidate and not burden the NGB with a large pool of nominees.

Successes with Officer PME

Despite the overall lack of in-residence participation in the ANG, there are some areas of success. Some progress has been made, both at the state and national levels. States have found ways to increase participation in PME and communicate its importance. There are areas where

the ANG falls short in its efforts to get officer participation. From both the successes and shortcomings, the ANG community can learn and continue to make improvements.

Research was conducted to find states which possessed a greater success of getting officers to attend in-residence PME. ANG data on in-residence ACSC and AWC attendance was tabulated for the past seven years, and particular states had a higher than average rate of officer attendance. What caused the higher number of officers to attend in-residence, and do these states have any particular program that fosters greater levels of attendance? Are there external factors that caused these states to have greater attendance, such as size of the state's officer force or proximity to Air University? After gathering responses from base education and training managers (BETM) from many of the top participating states, it became apparent that states did not have any special program to motivate officers to attend. These states do not currently possess written guidance or instruction governing PME expectations or a in-residence nomination process. From discussions with this sample of BETMs, it was found that states with a more robust level of PME participation have three distinct commonalities: senior leadership emphasis of PME, high visibility of PME in-residence announcements, and the tracking of officer PME progress and status.

One key common thread that exists in the states with higher in-residence participation levels is senior leadership emphasis and support. State and wing level leadership consistently advocate the importance of PME and communicate the value of attending these courses in-residence. Mentorship and “buy-in” occurs with squadron leadership and supervisors, and PME is “pushed at every level.”¹⁵

A second common trait among states with higher participation is visibility of school announcements. Messages for school availability get exposure at all levels, and are briefed at

commander's calls and staff meetings. They ensure it is briefed on UTA weekends, so it "does get a lot of exposure."¹⁶ Repetition is also key, as follow-up messages are sent out multiple times to ensure that all traditional guardsmen are aware of the opportunity.

Some states also do more than others to track officer eligibility and progress of PME. One wing uses a database that allows their BETMs to "pull eligibility reports for our commanders and UTMs."¹⁷ This visibility provides some transparency and accountability to the system, to ensure that officers continue to progress. It may also provide some unintentional but healthy competition between peers, who may wish to keep on par with fellow officers.

Many states do not possess any additional written policy or guidance that governs officer PME expectations. Without written state headquarters guidance, wing and squadron commanders are left to interpret PME issues at their level, which may lead to a lack of consistency in their application. One state that does possess an example of written policy on PME is Texas. They created a state level ANGI, the Texas Air National Guard Instruction 36-2301, *Professional Military Education*.¹⁸ This state instruction is titled similarly to the AFI and ANGI of the same number, but does not align its numbered sections with the corresponding sections in the national instructions. The document outlines expectations of PME completion prior to promotion boards, and the repercussions for not completing required PME in the proper time frame. In addition, the TANGI 36-2301 includes an attached "Certificate of Understanding," which all guardsmen must sign after having been briefed the document.¹⁹ To some this approach may appear heavy handed, but the concept is clear. It lays out educational expectations for all ranks, enlisted and officer, and it outlines what will happen if the expectations are not met. This document does not discuss or show preference for in-residence PME schools.

The NGB does provide material for states to consider on the subject of in-residence PME. This suggested guidance comes in the form of a “Concept of Operations,” or CONOPS.²⁰ The NGB created the *Force Development (Air National Guard Officer) CONOPS* in March 2005, which indicates the topic of improving PME opportunities for the ANG is not a new subject. Some of the same ideas advocated in this research paper are voiced in this CONOPS. However, over the last five years very little progress has been made in the area of force development in the ANG, particularly for officers. Most states did not choose to implement the force development suggestions offered in the CONOPS.²¹ The suggested guidance made in this document did not gain a great deal of acceptance in the ANG and was not disseminated to company grade officers in most states. This demonstrates a need for greater detail and clarity from the NGB and state headquarters, in order to develop a common level of understanding and “buy-in” from ANG officers.

SECTION 3: Assembling a program

Assembling a consistent officer PME program should be a top priority at both the NGB and state levels. There are three areas of attention that must be addressed in order for the ANG to build a diverse pool of well trained future leaders. First, it is critical to stress the importance of in-residence PME, and foster the desire to attend such courses. Second, by updating policy and guidance senior leadership can clearly articulate expectations and opportunities, allowing officers to chart an appropriate course for their own career. Finally, both the NGB and state leadership should strive to find ways to assist traditional guardsmen in attending in-residence schools or obtain equivalent experiences.

Fostering desire to attend

There are areas where the NGB can help to facilitate a greater knowledge of PME options and interest in in-residence attendance by communicating directly to the individual officer. One obvious avenue to reach the individual is through online computer connection. The Air Force Portal continues to improve as various individual websites become accessible from one location. The growing trend toward online “communities” has created avenues such as the Air Force Knowledge Now (AFKN) Community of Practice (CoP), which is accessible through the Air Force Portal.²² This enables military personnel that share careers or positions to exchange information and share common practices. Creation of a single ANG Force Development CoP where all guard personnel can reference course information and recent changes would be extremely helpful.²³ A newer area available on the Portal is the “My ODP,” where one can reference and tailor an Officer Development Plan.²⁴ At present, the reserve component portion lacks any additional guidance or information. This is an opportune location to allow ANG officers to track their career progression and learn of the opportunities available. The key to any of these efforts is that it must be easy to locate, access, and comprehend. If not, it will be underutilized.

States must provide better communication to their officers about PME and in-residence courses. From early in an officer’s career, the expectations and opportunities for each rank should be laid out clearly. Leadership must communicate to those who wish to progress to senior ranks that attendance of in-residence PME will play a strong part in making that opportunity available. By providing clear expectations early in the career of an officer, that individual may map out the best time in his or her life to try attending an in-residence school. It is also imperative that the importance and benefit of in-residence PME be made clear to those in

middle-management and supervisory positions. Without their “buy-in” and mentorship of subordinates, junior officers may choose to forgo the experience. As more officers from a state attend in-residence PME, the greater that state will tend to value the experience and value those who attend. Several different means of communication should be utilized to provide junior officer and supervisory expectations and create better awareness of intended career progression.

State leadership can address its officers in face to face meetings, providing clear guidance as well as receiving useful feedback. Briefing officers at the wing and squadron level provides an opportunity to address particular concerns that a group may have, as well as showing a more personal interest in an individual group’s development. State level National Guard Association meetings provide an excellent opportunity to reach both company and field grade officers. Providing one page bullet format summaries of meeting objectives ensures that more information will be retained and disseminated to officers’ peers.

As a suggestion, an “ANG Officer’s Handbook” could be created and include information on PME and other experience building opportunities, providing a roadmap for officer progression from Second Lieutenant to Colonel. Despite all of the electronic means of communication available, the ease of having a current reference guide in a paper format may still reach the largest audience. Providing website addresses and other reference materials within a handbook will allow officers to perform their own research and seek the most current information.

Wings should utilize recent in-residence PME graduates as a valuable resource for PME knowledge. Just through their own exposure, graduates are more familiar with the PME system and its processes. Since most ANG units contain less than one hundred officers, wings could have one or two “PME Officers” as an additional duty. They could act as a point of contact for

issues and assist the base education and training office (BETM) with officer PME program knowledge. These officers might also seek candidates to nominate for selection by the state headquarters to apply for in-residence PME.

For those officers willing to attend in-residence PME, states must also be willing to create opportunities for advancement upon their return. Ideally, in order to foster more skilled senior leadership by getting officers to attend PME, individuals attending would be offered positions that involve role and responsibility level increases. This would incentivize attendance of IDE/SDE. A major difference with the ANG system when compared to that of the active duty force is that an ANG officer who attends IDE or SDE may not be directly placed in a leadership position, as all of these positions must be publicly posted and formal applications submitted. An idea that might be considered is to include the preference for in-residence PME in senior level position descriptions. Written as a job qualification or a Knowledge, Skill, and Ability (KSA), the statement might read “intermediate or senior level in-residence PME preferred.” State and wing leadership must communicate that for those who dedicate the time to attend PME in-residence, eventually an officer’s experience and education will merit them a superior candidate for a leadership position. This is particularly important to communicate to leadership at the wing and group level, where many of the leadership position decisions are determined.

Updating policy & guidance

States should consider updating their policies or guidance in order to clearly articulate expectations regarding all PME. This might be in the form of a memorandum issued by the TAG or ATAG. By clarifying expectations and preferences in a single document that encompasses all ANG units within the state, it leaves no opportunity for misinterpretation or confusion at lower levels. In such a document, in-residence PME should be emphasized as important, and perhaps a

preferential means of accomplishment at some point in an officer's career. This will allow officers to calculate when an in-residence school might be achievable, and plan their military and civilian careers accordingly.

Much can be done at the national level regarding updating of guidance that relates to PME. The Force Development CONOPS is currently undergoing a rewrite, and is not available for review.²⁵ The 2005 CONOPS contains good suggestions, but often does not go far enough. The next CONOPS may be more helpful if it includes more detail, perhaps offering templates for states to choose to utilize. They may offer samples of a memo communicating expectations or a potential in-residence nomination process. If the subject of PME is truly important to the ANG, then the NGB needs to give the matter greater visibility and emphasis in its guidance.

Assisting Traditional Guardsmen

There are a few ways state and wing level leadership can work to assist traditional guardsman interested in attending in-residence PME. One of the deterrents to attending lengthy in-residence courses for officers in high-tempo wings is that time at school combines with their deployment requirements to a cumulative time away from home and employer that is unacceptable.²⁶ For traditional guardsmen who are interested in pursuing in-residence PME and are selected for a school, their unit supervisor, with the support of wing staff, should provide the opportunity to avoid deploying before and after their attendance, to ease the burden on their family and employer. PME should be thought of as both beneficial for the individual and the unit, and the officer is sacrificing enough time away to obtain valuable training. A second area that may ease the burden on traditional guardsman deals with working closely with the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). By working with local ESGR Field Committees within each state, the importance of all PME can be emphasized during meetings with local

employers.²⁷ This may foster a better understanding of the role PME plays in an officer's military career and make attendance more palatable for the employer.

The NGB can also assist with finding more opportunities for PME that merge in-residence experience with the convenience of correspondence. The last time the ANG Senior Leader Force Development Survey was completed was in 2004. In that survey, the largest group (54%) of leaders surveyed felt that a combination of correspondence and in-residence education methods was most beneficial to senior leaders in completing IDE and SDE.²⁸ The ARCS program has proven to be a successful endeavor, mixing traditional distance learning with one week seminars, where reserve component students can mix and exchange ideas. Many officers prefer the structured timeline that ARCS offers and meeting with peers in a seminar format enhances the learning experience. Unfortunately space is limited in the current program. The current ACSC ARCS class offered 42 slots, twenty of which are filled by the ANG.²⁹ This constraint is due to the Air University facilities not being able to handle more students during the limited period of time that in-residence courses are not in session.³⁰ The NGB should work with AU to expand the ARCS program concept to provide additional ARCS locations. In addition to the AU classes currently offered, ANG bases with adequate facilities for small group seminars could host a regional ARCS on an annual basis. The current course at Maxwell AFB does not utilize any academic instructors from the AU, only recent in-residence PME graduates as facilitators. Provided a different location could secure recent PME students to assist with the seminars, there would be no difference in the quality of the course. Varying the month in which it is held may allow some of the same facilitators to participate at different locations. The NGB could cover the cost of providing the facilitators, while the students attending would remain unit funded.³¹ The same curriculum would be used at all facilities. By adding more seminar

locations, more officers could participate in ARCS annually and it would offer more choices as to when an officer might be able to attend. Offering ARCS on a regional basis may also decrease costs associated with students attending, allowing units to send more officers. A pilot program of starting one ARCS course at a different location should be tested first before expanding the program extensively.

SECTION 4: Improving the Nomination & Selection Process

More emphasis placed on attendance of in-residence schools at the national and state levels should increase demand over the coming years, as officers develop a career path that incorporates in-residence PME. The current limited number of annual slots the ANG possesses will fill up quickly when this occurs. If a state with a significantly larger number of officers nominates multiple officers every year and forwards all names to NGB, then states with a fewer number of officers may not get to reap the benefit of having some in-residence graduates in their units. Adjustments to the current method of nomination and selection should be considered, both at the NGB and state levels.

The NGB may consider altering its selection process of in-residence officer PME as the demand for slots rises. Three sides seem to exist on the issue of a proper selection process. It is rational that states with a smaller officer force would like to equitably share the few in-residence slots available, in order to have the opportunity to improve their leadership education and experience level. States with a larger officer force may prefer a more proportional approach to selection, using the ratio of their officers as compared to the total number in the ANG. A third opinion states that the best individual officer candidates should be chosen regardless of state, in order to give the ANG as a broader entity the best potential for senior leadership. Given the fact that so few slots are available to the ANG, particularly for IDE and SDE, it seems sensible to

only accept a limited number of nominees from each state. This should include limiting nominees from the NGB, officers on statutory tours at the bureau. Given the current fifteen slots available for ACSC, if all 54 states and territories offered one nominee they might expect to have an officer attend every three to four years.³² Ultimately, this decision should rest either on the NGB senior leadership or with a conference of TAGs, to determine the appropriate level at which to house the educational experience of in-residence schools.

As the demand for in-residence education increases and the ANG consistently fills all officer PME slots, then the NGB should consider petitioning for a more proportional percentage of slots. With more funding for in-residence education and a greater number of slots offered to the ANG, more states will have the opportunity to send their officers. The ANG has already accomplished a similar victory with enlisted PME, with regard to the Senior NCO Academy. Originally, the ANG had roughly half of the 240 slots it has available currently.³³ First, it increased demand through better awareness and communication, an effort started through meetings of the states' Command Chief Master Sergeants.³⁴ Once demand was consistently higher than the number of slots available, the ANG petitioned for more and eventually obtained the current 240 available.³⁵

Once demand for in-residence PME increases due to better communication and career planning, states should seek to create a consistent and equitable nomination process for in-residence programs. Senior leadership must plan to ask their best officers to attend in-residence. With the proper mentorship from immediate supervisors, these exceptional officers will be willing to devote the time required to attend PME. States should create a system in which senior leadership receives input from its wings and nominates two or three officers to attend BDE (SOS) and one officer each to attend IDE and SDE (ACSC & AWC or equivalent schools) per

year. These nominees would then compete at the NGB level to receive a slot for in-residence PME. Alternate nominees could attend if the NGB is unable to fill all its available slots and requests more nominees. This would give the NGB a realistic pool of candidates from which to select. This type of state-level competitive system is more representative of a process that can be quite selective at the NGB level, particularly when all 54 states and territories must compete for the few slots available.

SECTION 5: Summary and Conclusion

Several suggestions are offered in this paper that pertain to the national, state, and wing level. A summary of suggestions for potential implementation is included in bullet format in the appendix (Appendix A).

More effort must be exerted at the national, state, and local level to increase ANG attendance of in-residence PME, thereby providing states with a larger number of knowledgeable senior leaders. Devoting time to this endeavor can become challenging, particularly for a traditional guardsman in the ANG. It is imperative that senior leaders stress the need for military education throughout an officer's career, allowing them to devote time to attend in-residence PME. States must also provide an equitable, systematic means of selecting their best officers to attend in-residence courses. Senior leaders at the state and wing level also need to acknowledge the commitment and sacrifice required to become a skilled, educated officer, and attempt to ease the burden schools place on their personnel in any way possible. With proper direction and emphasis, the ANG can continue to develop skilled, capable leadership for the future.

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APPENDIX A

Implementation Recommendation - Summary of Suggestions

NGB Suggestions

1. Utilize Air Force Portal (My ODP and CoPs) to communicate PME opportunities and career progression
2. Expand the ARCS program to allow more guardsmen to attend a seminar-based PME course
3. Petition for more in-residence class slots as demand increases, to provide more opportunities for the ANG

State Suggestions

1. Advocate the importance of officer PME and communicate the value of attending courses in-residence
 - a. State leadership meet face to face with officers to brief expectations and receive feedback
 - b. Create an ANG “Officer’s Handbook” for general reference on career guidance
2. Create or update policy/guidance governing officer PME expectations and in-residence preferences
3. Create a consistent officer nomination process to ensure their best officers are presented to the NGB for selection to PME courses

Wing level Suggestions

1. Ensure dissemination of school availability messages, using methods to reach traditional guardsmen
2. Track officer PME eligibility and progress; instill a healthy competition between officers
3. Utilize recent PME graduates as “PME Officer” additional duty; assist with PME course opportunities
4. Assist traditional guardsmen
 - a. Ease the burden of lengthy schools by altering deployment requirements
 - b. Utilize ESGR opportunities to educate local employers about the importance of PME

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